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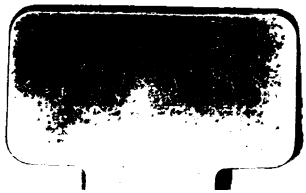
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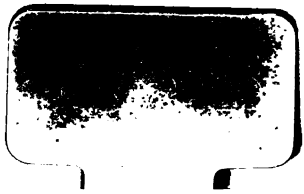
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THE ICE KING AND THE SWEET SOUTH WIND

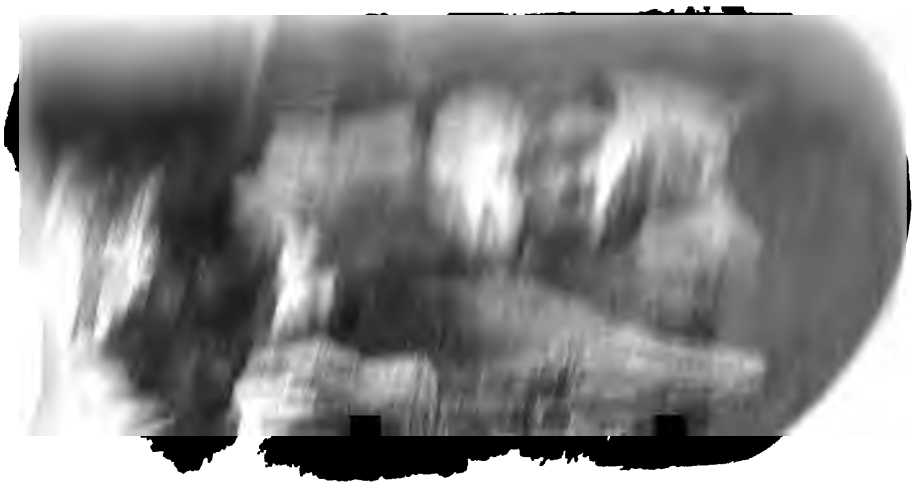
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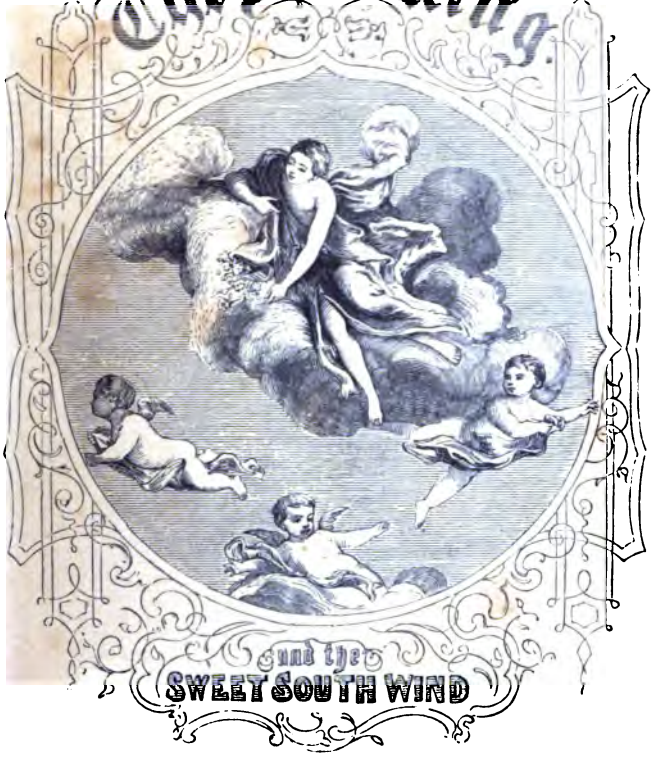

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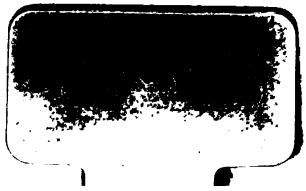
The Ice King



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The Ice King.



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The Ice King.



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THE

ICE KING

AND THE

SWEET SOUTH WIND.

BY

MRS. CAROLINE H. BUTLER.

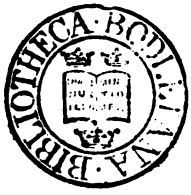
"I will open my mouth in a parable."—*Psalm* lxxviii. 2.



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TO

MY LITTLE FRIENDS,

WILLIE AND EDDIE ELLIS,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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THE ICE KING

AND

THE SWEET SOUTH WIND.

O the Ice King, the Ice King!
A frosty old king is he!
He sits on his throne—an icy block,
Firm and fixed as the solid rock,
And with frozen snow in fluted fold
Enwrapping his icy shoulders cold;
His beard long icicles, sharp and thin,
Which crackle beneath his pointed chin.
O the Ice King, the Ice King!
A frosty old king is he!
And I hope, dear children, you or I
May never the Ice King see!

O the Ice King, the Ice King!
A frigid old king is he!
Ranged around in regular row,
His satellites grim of sorrow and woe,
In casque and cuirass of icy mail,
Studded around with bullets of hail,
Rattle their spears, most fearful to see,
Shaped from the ice of the Frozen Sea.
O the Ice King, the Ice King!
A frigid old king is he!
And I hope, dear children, you or I
May never the Ice King see.

O the Ice King, the Ice King!
A bitter old king is he!
He points with his bloodless finger, cold,
To the hearts of mortals, young and old,
And there the mischief 'tis hard to tell,
Which the Ice King works with his icy spell,
Chilling, congealing, turning to stone
The virtues which dwell there, one by one!
O the Ice King, the Ice King!

A bitter old king is he!
And I hope, dear children, you or I
May never the Ice King see.

Yet for all the Ice King sits there in such stern majesty upon his lofty throne, which is as broad and as brilliant as the mighty Falls of Niagara would be, were the whole glorious mass of waters, in their stupendous leap, suddenly to become solid glittering ice; and although he is guarded on every side by those icy-mailed warriors rattling their sharp-pointed spears; yet the Ice King sometimes shakes with fear, and mighty throes, as of an earthquake, heave his stony bosom; and great drops gather upon his brow, and then falling slowly down his icy face, and freezing as they fall, rattle like hailstones through his icicled beard.

Ah, then how the frigid limbs of the Ice King tremble! how he shudders and quakes! For he fears that, mighty as he is, he is slipping from his broad, glittering throne, and that the throne

itself is slowly, slowly sinking, like a huge iceberg, into the deep, deep ocean!

But why does he fear? What is the power which can thus dispute his sway, and move the frozen majesty of the Ice Monarch? what the mighty spirit, overcoming might, which thus threatens to hurl both monarch and throne into the watery depths?

Ah, my dear little readers, it is no warrior grim travelling over the earth, like the valiant men of olden time, to battle against Oppression and Tyranny — it is no monstrous giant, with breath of flame, preparing bolts of fire to crush and dissolve the power of the Ice King — for not such foes does the Ice King fear!

It is the Sweet South Wind, balmy and soft as the breath of a babe on its mother's breast — it is the Sweet South Wind moving gently on, unseen, but felt, which causes the monarch to quake and tremble; and softly and mildly as the beautiful words of Jesus should move the heart of a little child to goodness, does the Sweet South

Wind, in low murmuring tones, proclaim his presence.

Very bitter is the hatred which the Ice King bears to the Sweet South Wind—just as sin always hates that which is good and lovely—and various are the ways by which he strives to oppose the entrance of his gentle but powerful foe into his dominions.

As soon as he feels the Sweet South Wind approaching, he blows from his monstrous mouth and from his wide-expanded nostrils a cloud of misty vapour, which, congealing all around him, forms a huge icy barrier, which it would seem no power could overcome; and as the Ice King sits behind that frozen barricade, there are sounds like the howling of hungry bears upon the polar ice, and strange growlings and roarings most dreadful to hear; and now and then sharp reports like the firing of many guns, by which the Ice King hopes to frighten away the gentle Sweet South Wind.

Nor is it only in this, the very region of his

icy dominion, that he fears the gentle influence; for into the homes and haunts of mortals the Ice King sends forth a band of cruel spirits to work his will.

Clad in robes of sleet and snow, they come riding on dark, leaden clouds, wailing and shrieking as they weave their icy spells; and to some of these is given power to touch the hearts of mortals with evil, and to chill in them those gentle feelings of love, pity, kindness, and charity, which God has implanted in every breast.

And it is here that the Ice King again feels and dreads the power of the Sweet South Wind.

Shall I tell you why?

Then listen:

O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Beauty is he!
Throned on a cloud of azure bright,
Beaming and rosy as morning light,
Over the earth, and across the sea,
The Sweet South Wind moves lovingly,

While softly swelleth all around
Music of sweet Æolian sound.
O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Beauty is he!
And I hope, dear children, you and I
This Spirit of Beauty may see.

O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Gladness is he!
For ever around him beings fair
Circle and swim in the balmy air,
Their robes more pure than the snow-white dove;
They float near the spirit with looks of love,
Their rosy pinions half unfurled,
Blessings to bear to a sinful world.
O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Gladness is he!
And I hope, dear children, you and I
This Spirit of Gladness may see.

O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Joy is he!

For where the light of his smile is seen,
Fair flowerets spring, the fields are green,
Bright waters dance o'er the laughing earth,
The bird and the butterfly wake to mirth,
And the icy spells the Ice King wove
Are melted away by that smile of love.
O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Joy is he!
And I hope, dear children, you and I
This Spirit of Joy may see.

O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Love is he!
There is not a babe of mortal birth,
Or a being that walks the beautiful Earth,
The Spirit of Love would not keep from harm,
And draw unto him with his loving arm,
While in every heart he would claim abode,
And point earth's children the way to God.
O the Sweet South Wind, the Sweet South Wind!
A Spirit of Love is he!

And I hope, dear children, you and I
This Spirit of Love may see.

Now, dear children, the spirits of the Ice King have great power, and are the cause of a great deal of sorrow in the world; and were it not for the gentle pleadings of the beautiful messengers which the Sweet South Wind sends forth to oppose their influence, I am sure I do not know what would become of us: there would be no love, no pity, no kindness, I am afraid, among us, and our hearts would be as cold as the Ice King's own.

Often the pitiless Ice King points his finger at the breast of some old grey-headed man, and then the spirits who obey his will fill the heart of that old man with avarice and cruelty, so that he will not even give a poor starving fellow-creature a crust of mouldy bread to keep him alive. Perhaps it is around the heart of some wife and mother, some young man or maiden, that the evil spirits would weave their spells,

chilling all their generous and kindly feelings, and making them cold, selfish, and oftentimes very, very wicked! And even young and innocent childhood cannot escape the power of the Ice King! and indeed it is over children he loves best to exert his power: their young and tender hearts it is his delight to chill. He would make them disobedient to their parents. He would have them forget God. He would like them to be selfish and cruel. He would have them hate their books, and, indeed, so freeze and harden their hearts, little by little, that, should they live to be old, only a lump of ice, shaped like a human heart, would remain in their bosoms.

It is no wonder that the grim old Ice King hates the Sweet South Wind; for often, when he thinks the Ice Spirits have fastened their icy chains firmly around the heart of their victim, the Sweet South Wind, robed in beauty, glides softly in, and with balmy breath melts away their work, penetrates the fast-freezing heart, and, with a

smile of resistless love, enthrones therein a band of gentle spirits, over whom neither the Ice King nor the Ice Spirits can have control; for wherever the lovely followers of the Sweet South Wind dwell, whether in palace or cottage, or in the hearts of mortals, these cruel spirits cannot enter. No. Like huge lions they may howl around —they may rattle and shiver their icy spears against the windows and doors, and knock, knock, knock, with their cold, stony fingers, at the heart —but all in vain! Subdued at length by the power of Goodness, they yield—they disappear; and as they vanish, the bright green grass springs up, and beautiful flowers blossom for joy.

Perhaps, my dear young readers, you will understand my meaning better, if I relate to you some stories, which will shew you in what manner the Ice King and the Sweet South Wind may touch even your hearts, and influence your conduct.

I dare say many of you have read Æsop's Fables — that pleasant book, which makes the

birds, and the beasts, and even the little fishes proclaim good and evil. I am not going to tell you fables. But perhaps you already say, that the Ice King and the Sweet South Wind are but a fable. Very well. I will therefore illustrate my fable, if fable you say it is, by giving you some little sketches of those children whom I know to have been made happy or unhappy—who were beloved or disliked by every one—through the influence which those opposite spirits of Good and of Evil held over them.

Let me hope their example may open your young hearts to the gentle and beautiful spirit of the Sweet South Wind, and that the power of the Ice King may melt away like the snows of winter under the genial breath of spring.


The Christmas Cake

THE CHRISTMAS CAKE.

"COME, come, Alick, put away your book. See, the sun has almost crept away from the window-ledge."

"Then it must be one o'clock, mother."

"Yes, Alick, and it is time you were off."

"I know it, mother. I will be ready in a moment," replied the little boy, closing his book, and laying it upon the shelf. Then throwing off his jacket, he plunged his head into a tub of water which stood upon the hearth, lifted it as quickly out, and then shaking his dark, curly locks, as a young Newfoundland dog might do, he exclaimed, laughing,—

"There, mother — all right — this side up. Now, what is the errand?"

"O Alick, Alick, what a careless boy you are!" said Mrs. Alison. "Only see how you have

spattered the water about! But come, put on your jacket, and your great-coat too, for it is growing cold. Now, here is a basket of eggs which you are to take to Mr. Girder's shop,—be very careful you do not break them, Alick,—and ask him to give you some flour and sugar for them."

"Suppose I ask him to stir the eggs into the flour and sugar for a Christmas pudding," cried Alick, roguishly.

"O, nonsense, child—do mind what I say. Well, after you have got the flour and sugar for the eggs, go over to Mrs. Plant's with this pail of butter,—there are just four pounds,—and get the money for it; and then, Alick, come straight home, and don't stop to play with any of the boys; and be sure that you get the flour and sugar, for if you do not, you cannot have your Christmas cake, and what is more, your little sister cannot have hers. There now, run along; but do be careful, there's a good boy, not to upset your basket."

"O, never fear, mother," answered Alick; "I will walk as steady as our old gander, and shan't forget any thing, I can tell you. I am off. Good-bye, mother!" And kissing her bright-eyed, handsome boy, Mrs. Alison saw him depart.

It was the day before Christmas, and a fine pleasant day it was. Not a cloud could be seen floating on the bright blue sky, which bent so beautifully over the snow-covered earth, and the snow itself all crisped and sparkling in the glad sunshine; and as little Alick trudged along over the scarcely-worn path, carefully balancing in each hand the basket and the little tin pail of butter, he was as happy as child could be. He thought of the morrow, and of the fine Christmas cake which he was to have, and he wondered if any other little boy would be as happy. It was true he had heard his mother tell a great many stories about Christmas, and what fine things Santa Claus sometimes gave good children. But this did not make him at all discontented or un-

happy. Santa Claus had never given him any thing, to be sure; but he did not doubt that if he only knew there was such a little boy as Alick Alison, he would fetch him something; so that it was not his fault. His mother was poor, and he knew she had to work very hard. Now, if good Santa Claus would only bring her a new gown or a warm shawl, that indeed would be nice.

"But never mind, I shall soon be a man," thought this brave little boy of nine years old, "and then I shall be able to earn a great deal of money, and I will give it all to my mother." And on went Alick, whistling and singing across the snow.

He was now more than half-way to the village. He already saw the gilded weathercock on the church-steeple glittering in the sunshine, and could see the smoke curling up from the black chimney-tops, and he fancied he could almost hear the shouts of the children playing in the streets; and Alick stepped more briskly forward.

But now, what should Alick see but a flock of pretty little quails hopping about on the snow. Pretty creatures they were, in their little brown coats, pecking the sparkling crust with their slender bills.

"Now, I shouldn't wonder," thought Alick, "if I could hit one of those little fellows. How nice it would be for mother's Christmas dinner! I have a great mind to try." So he very foolishly set down the basket of eggs and the pail of butter upon the top of a snow-bank, by the side of the road; and then, scooping up the snow, he began to roll it round and round in his little hands, squeezing it tighter and tighter into little hard snowballs, to throw at the poor quails.

Ah, take care, Alick, take care! you had better let them alone.

But the little brown-coated quails did not seem to be at all frightened at the preparations Alick was making for his mother's Christmas dinner. They cocked their little heads very knowingly as they skipped along, whistling,

"*No, you don't, no, you don't;*" and some of them nodded at him, and shook their little wings, just as if they were laughing at him. At last, approaching very softly, tip-tip-tipping on tip-toe, Alick let fly a large snowball right in the midst of them. The quails hopped up to it, tried it with their little black bills, and then, again nodding their cunning little heads, they whistled, "*Well done, well done.*"

Alick aimed a second time. The little quails threw out their pretty feet, and began bobbing about, as if they were dancing a polka; and then, to shew their independence, and the little fear they had of being broiled or roasted, they came skip-skip-skipping over the snow, nearer and nearer to where the little boy stood, about to throw his third snowball. And now Alick was sure he should hit one; he could not help it when they were so close to him; and again he took aim at the little birds: but, alas! instead of hitting the saucy quails, the snowball struck against the basket with full force, and tilting it over, out popped

the eggs to see what was the matter; and then away they went, rolling over and over down the bank, crack, crack, crack against one another—they were in such a hurry—so that, by the time they had reached the bottom, all that remained of poor Mrs. Alison's fine eggs was a heap of shells resting in a pool of their own bright yellow yolk. Poor Alick!

If he had been suddenly turned into a little snow man, he could not have stood more still than he did for a minute or two as he saw the consequence of his carelessness. Poor little boy! At last he threw himself down in the snow, and began to cry bitterly.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what shall I do? What will mother say to me? Oh, what a naughty boy I have been!"

And then he thought of the Christmas cake, and his tears fell all the faster; not so much for his own disappointment, as because his little sister, who was both sick and lame, could not have any.

"Oh, those ugly quails! how I wish I had

never seen them!" cried Alick, impatiently, as he wiped his eyes, and began to consider what he should do.

Ah, Alick, don't call those pretty harmless little quails "ugly." You may be sure they would not have done you any mischief; not they. It is not their fault that your beautiful Christmas cake has vanished among those broken egg-shells.

Lifting the little pail of butter, and taking the empty basket on his arm, Alick again set forth on his journey; and very sad indeed he felt. But at length he began to comfort himself with the thought, that perhaps Mr. Girder the grocer would let him have the flour and sugar for his mother: yes, he felt quite sure he would, for he would tell him the whole story; and how his little sister could not have her Christmas cake unless he would trust him, and that he would ask his mother to let him come and go errands for him until he had worked enough to pay him; and he would be so grateful to him besides.

You may be very certain that Alick did not

stop to snowball any more quails, but kept on very steadily, as he should have done at first, until he reached the village. He went directly to Mrs. Plant's with the butter, and knocked softly at the door.

It was opened by Mrs. Plant herself, her sleeves turned up over her elbows, a rolling-pin in her hand, and her good-humoured face all sprinkled with flour. You might have known it was merry Christmas-time.

"Come in, my little man. Why, you look half frozen. Come, sit down by the kitchen-fire and warm yourself," she said, pointing to a little stool.

Alick did feel a little cold; so he went and sat down in the corner of the large fireplace, piled up with great big logs, and where there was fire enough to have roasted a whole ox for Christmas, as they did in old times. A table stood out in the middle of the kitchen, covered with mince-pies, and apple-pies, and puddings, all ready to be put in the oven; and Mrs. Plant's two little girls were

stoning raisins and beating eggs, which made poor Alick think again of his Christmas cake; and little Tommy, no bigger than himself, was pounding away at a great big mortar. Oh, such preparations for merry Christmas little Alick had never seen! and then such a delicious smell of cake and other good things!

For the first time in his life a feeling of envy crept into the heart of the little boy as he looked at these happy children, and thought what a fine Christmas they were going to have; and how, perhaps, his little sister and himself would not have any thing to eat but a bowl of hasty-pudding and milk, or a roast potato. His bright eyes clouded over with discontent, and he could scarcely refrain from crying.

Envy is one of the spirits of the Ice King.

The cheerful voice of Mrs. Plant aroused the little boy:

"I suppose your mother wants the money for the butter, Alick."

"If you please, ma'am."

"Well, here it is. Now be careful; don't lose it; and here is a nice Christmas cake for you to eat as you go along," said Mrs. Plant, putting into his hand a bright new silver florin, and a pretty little cake baked in the shape of a rose.

"Thank you, thank you!" cried Alick joyfully; and as soon as he got out of doors, he put the cake very carefully in his pocket to carry home to his little sister. He would not have eaten it himself for the world.

He no longer felt the wicked spirit of envy; but as he bent his way to the grocer's shop, in his grateful little heart Alick hoped that good Mrs. Plant's children would be happier on the morrow than any little children ever were before.

How much good a kind word or even a look may do!

"Ah, here you come, Alick!" said Mr. Girder, as the little boy entered the shop. "So you have brought the eggs at last; why didn't you come sooner, eh? Here, Betty, come back; here are some fine fresh eggs, tell your mistress—eggs

worth having. Hand over your basket, boy. Quick; this girl is waiting."

"Please, sir, I have not got any eggs," said Alick, holding down his head.

"Have not got any eggs? What do you mean? Your mother promised to send me three dozen to-day."

"She did, sir; but —"

"You let Mrs. Plant have them, you young scamp, did you?"

"No, sir, I —"

"Sold them over the way, eh?"

"No, I broke them," sobbed Alick.

"Broke them, did you? Why, you ought to have every bone in your skin broken! The eggs were mine, sirrah. I had engaged them; they were my eggs. How dare you break them?" cried Mr. Girder, in a terrible passion.

"I could not help it," sobbed out Alick again. "I did not mean to do it; I am very sorry."

"Oh, you are sorry, are you? What good will that do me, I should like to know?"

"Indeed, I am very sorry; I know I have done wrong. I was throwing snowballs at some quails, and I hit the basket."

"Snowballing quails, eh? Oh, you're a precious fellow: I'd quail you, if you were my boy. Well, what do you want, then? What brought you here, eh?" said cross Mr. Girder.

Alick felt better now; so he looked up into the face of Mr. Girder, half smiling through his tears, and said:

"If you please, sir, I came to ask you if you would be so good as to let me have some flour and sugar for mother, as much as the eggs would have come to, sir, and I will work for you every day, sir, until I pay you."

At these words the grocer burst out laughing.

"Well, if you are not the most impudent young scamp I ever saw! Ask me to pay for eggs I never had, do you? Get out of my shop quick, before I catch hold of you."

"But, Mr. Girder," persisted Alick, "we

shan't be able to have any Christmas cake if you don't let me have the things for mother: please do, sir."

"Christmas cake! You don't deserve to have any. Away with you: I'll teach you how to break eggs!" And the grocer shook his hard red fist at the little boy.

Alick now thought of the florin which Mrs. Plant had paid him for the butter, and he put his hand in his pocket to get it; for he was very sure that his mother would like to have him buy some flour and sugar with it, if the cross grocer would not let him have them without. But he could not find it: the florin was gone!

He searched his pockets; he turned them inside out; he shook his mittens, his tippet, his cap; he turned the little cake over and over again; but, alas, nowhere could he find the bright silver florin. He was afraid to tell Mr. Girder of this new misfortune. He did not know but he would kill him if he did; for he looked so dreadfully cross at him out of his ugly grey eyes.

So poor little Alick left the shop, and retraced the road to Mrs. Plant's, looking very carefully on each side, and pushing up the snow with his foot, hoping every moment to find his lost money.

But there was no such good fortune for Alick.

When he reached Mrs. Plant's house, he knocked very timidly, and asked, with tears in his eyes, if he had dropped the florin there. No, it was not there; and Mrs. Plant called him a very careless little boy, which grieved him almost as much as the loss of the money.

Poor little Alick! he had been very careless, it is true; but you would have pitied him as he turned from the village and began to walk slowly homeward. When he left his dear mother only two hours before, how happy he was! and now he was going back to her in disgrace and empty-handed.

He thought how sorry she would feel, and how much his bad behaviour would grieve her; and then his poor little sister, how she would cry, because she could not have the beautiful Christ-

mas cake which she had been thinking and talking about for so many weeks! and all because he had been so careless. On went little Alick very slowly, and with downcast eyes, which were sometimes almost blinded by great round tears.

Directly in his path Alick suddenly saw something very bright and glittering. What could it be? He stooped eagerly to see, and to his surprise and delight he found it was a very handsome open-work purse, filled with silver and gold coins.

Alick now fairly danced for joy as he held the purse in his hand, tossing it up and down, and kissing it.

"Oh, this is for Christmas! yes, Santa Claus put it here on purpose for me. Hurrah for my Christmas cake! How happy I am! I wonder how much there is in it." And the little boy sat down on the snow by the road-side, and was about to open the pretty shining purse, when suddenly the thought came over him that he must not—that it was not his.

"Perhaps Santa Claus did not mean it for me, after all," he said. "Somebody may have dropped it: no, I must not open it; but, oh dear, how I do, do wish it was mine!"

And little Alick looked at it wistfully, and turned it over and over in his hand, still wishing it was his.

And while he sat thus looking at it, a very strange and terrible feeling came over the child. Why does he tremble so? why look so stealthily all around him, and up and down the road, as if he was doing a very wicked thing, and was afraid some one was looking at him?

Shall I tell you?

It was because the wicked spirits of the Ice King were near him, and he felt their chill breath freezing his blood; and his cheek turned white, and his heart grew cold, as they hoarsely whispered:

"Keep it; keep the purse, Alick; nobody saw you pick it up. Put it in your pocket; it is yours."

"No, dear Alick," sighed the spirit of the Sweet South Wind, kissing his cheek; "it is not yours: don't be so wicked as to keep it."

"It will give you a Christmas cake, Alick—it will give you a great many nice things: keep it," urged the Ice Spirit.

"Alick, Alick! 'Thou shalt not steal!'" again whispered the gentle spirit of the Sweet South Wind.

"It is not stealing: you found the purse. It is yours," cried the other.

And now, while these two spirits of Good and of Evil were thus contending for the heart of little Alick, the child saw a lady walking very slowly towards him, with her eyes bent upon the ground, and looking carefully on each side of the road, and into all the little snow-drifts.

"Get over the fence quick, and hide yourself; keep the purse; there is gold in it, Alick!" and it seemed to the little boy as if he felt the icy fangs of the Ice Spirit striking deeper and deeper into his heart.

Then, with his dear mother's eyes, did the gentle spirit of the Sweet South Wind look upon him, and under that sorrowful but kindly smile the little boy felt his heart grow warm again.

His eye brightened; he no longer trembled like some criminal.

"No, the purse is not mine—I will not keep it!" he exclaimed.

And as the child spoke, the wicked spirits of the Ice King fled away.

"Have you lost any thing, ma'am?" said Alick, running to meet the lady.

"Yes, I have lost my purse," was the answer.

"Is this it?" holding up the little steel purse, with the tempting gold shining through it.

"Yes, it is mine; thank you, my good little boy," said the lady. "I was very much afraid I should not be able to find it again in the snow. You are an honest little fellow, I see; and here is a crown for you."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, ma'am! I am so much obliged to you!" cried the little boy.

"Please, ma'am, may I spend it?" he asked, looking up eagerly into her face.

"Why, to be sure you may, if you wish—it is your own," replied the lady, smiling; "but what do you want to buy?"

"Why, I thought I would go back to the village and get some things for my mother, for to-morrow will be Christmas. Oh, I am so happy, so glad! Now little Nelly can have her Christmas cake!" And as he said this, little Alick was so full of joy, that he actually jumped up on the top of a high snow-bank, and cut two or three droll capers.

Oh, how much happier he felt than if he had wickedly kept the purse!

The lady could not help laughing to see the little boy so merry; and she was pleased, too, to hear him say that it was for his mother he wanted to spend his money; so she began to question him as they walked along together; and she spoke so kindly and pleasantly to him, and seemed so much interested in all he said, that little

Alick unburdened his heart to her of all his troubles.

He told her how foolish he had been to snowball the little quails, and by that means break all the nice eggs; and how he had lost the money which Mrs. Plant paid him for the butter, although how or when he lost it, he was sure he did not know, for he never once had his hand in his pocket until he got to the grocer's shop. And then he told her how Mr. Girder would not give him the flour and sugar for his mother, although he had begged so hard. And now little Alick began to cry, and he turned away his head for shame, and could not look into the pleasant eyes of the lady, as he told her how very, very wicked he felt, when he held her pretty purse in his hand, and how something whispered to him to hide it and keep the money; and then that he seemed to see his mother looking at him, O, so sorrowful, which made him know in a moment how very bad his thoughts were.

"And O, I was so glad," continued the little

boy, " when I saw you coming along the road, for I was sure that the purse was yours, and I felt a great deal happier when I had given it to you !"

The lady told him she was very sorry that he had been so wicked as even to think for a moment of keeping her purse; but that he had done well to struggle against such a temptation, and to confess his fault.

By this time they had reached the village, and Alick hastened into the grocer's shop to purchase some nice things for his mother. Seeing that he held the money in his hand, Mr. Girder suddenly became very kind to the little boy, whom only a short time before he had turned out of his shop, and he weighed out the flour and the sugar, and a pound of nice tea, with a very pleasant smile, and even joked the little boy about his snow-balling the birds.

While waiting for his things, Alick happened to cast his eyes upon the floor, and what should he see but his own bright silver florin which

Mrs. Plant had paid him! Yes, there it lay among some straw which had been thrown out of a crockery-crate! Alick had pulled it out of his pocket with his handkerchief, when he first came into the shop; but it fell so softly upon the straw that he did not hear it drop.

"Here it is—here is my florin!" he exclaimed joyfully to the lady, who had followed him into the shop.

But now Mr. Girder put on a very serious and threatening look, and told Alick the money could not be his; and I am very much afraid that if the lady had not come forward to the assistance of the little boy, and claimed the money for him, poor Alick would have been cheated by cruel Mr. Girder, whose heart had long lain cold and heavy in the fetters of the Ice King.

"And now, Alick," said his kind friend, "you must have some plums; for what would a Christmas cake be without plums?"

So, to Alick's great delight, she bought him some fine fresh raisins, and filled up his little tin

pail with oranges, and figs, and almonds; and what delighted little Alick even more than to carry all these nice things home to his mother and little sister, the lady promised him that she would come and see him, and help him to eat his Christmas cake.

What a happy little boy was Alick that night! and how fervently good Mrs. Alison thanked God that he had delivered her dear little child from the Tempter!



Little Annie Leslie.

LITTLE ANNIE LESLIE.

WHEN Annie Leslie was only ten years old, she had the misfortune to lose her dear mother by death.

Mrs. Leslie had been sick almost ever since little Annie was a babe; and although she loved the little girl very, very dearly, she was not able to endure the least noise, so that Annie could never stay in the room with her mama but a very few moments each day. The rest of her time was spent with the nurses and servants, who, to gain favour with Mrs. Leslie, petted and humoured little Annie in every thing; for Mrs. Leslie told them they must let her dear little girl do just as she pleased, and never attempt to oppose her wishes, but the very moment she expressed a desire to have any thing, or do any thing, whether right or wrong, she must be gratified.

Now this was not only very foolish, but very

wrong; and the result of such bad management was, that it made little Annie very disagreeable to every body, except to her poor mother, whose eyes were entirely blinded to her faults. But poor Mrs. Leslie was such an invalid that we must pity her weakness, and not condemn her. If she had been in health, she would no doubt have done very differently.

Well, as I said before, when Annie was ten years old Mrs. Leslie died. Very soon after this, her father, who was an officer in the navy, and who was seldom at home any length of time, was ordered off upon a long voyage. He felt very much grieved, as you may well suppose, to be obliged to leave his dear and motherless little girl for so long a time to the care of strangers. So he resolved at length to write to his sister, who lived many miles away in a pretty town, and ask her to receive his little Annie under her care. The answer was satisfactory; and in a few days, under the charge of an old family servant, she arrived at her aunt's.

When the coach stopped, Annie saw a fine-looking lady standing in the door of a pretty cottage, holding by the hand a little girl quite as tall as Annie herself, while a boy about twelve years old was frolicking with a beautiful dog in the high sweet clover.

Mrs. Morland advanced to meet little Annie, as she was lifted from the coach, and kissing her tenderly on each cheek, she said,—

"You are welcome, my dear little girl. Come here, Albert and Minnie; this is your little cousin Annie Leslie. Kiss her, and tell her how glad you are to see her."

The children came forward smiling and blushing, and holding out their hands to the little stranger. But uttering a shrill scream, Annie stamped her foot, and throwing herself into the arms of the woman who accompanied her, cried out,—

"Go away. I won't be kissed! I want to go home. I don't like you!"

"But you will like us one of these days,"

said Mrs. Morland, smiling; "so come into the house now, and we will soon get acquainted." And she attempted to take Annie's hand to lead her in; but the child, still clinging tightly to the servant, screamed,—

"I won't go in—take away the dog! I hate dogs—take him away, you ugly great boy!"

"The dog will not hurt you, my dear; but if you are afraid of him, Albert will take him off," said Mrs. Morland, gently.

Master Albert looked very much insulted, not only at the disrespect shown to his favourite Fido, but that his little cousin should apply the epithet "ugly" to himself; and it was with a flushed cheek and an angry glance at Annie, that, whistling to Fido, he bounded away through an adjoining field.

After great coaxing, Miss Annie was at length prevailed upon to go up the steps leading into the pretty little porch, thence into the house, where, after much resistance, her bonnet and shawl were taken off. But the little girl sat sul-

kily upon one end of the sofa, and would not answer any of the questions her aunt put to her, or even speak to little Minnie, who had already brought her new doll for her to play with, and one or two pretty books besides.

"Have you got a doll, Annie?" asked Minnie, sitting down on a little stool at her cousin's feet.

"To be sure I have. I don't want to see your ugly doll; so do go away, go away, will you? there!" and she pushed little Minnie's arm, who, with tears swelling to her pretty blue eyes, walked away to the window, and hid her face in the curtain.

"What a small room this is, isn't it, Jane? Why, it is not half so big as papa's parlour; and what an ugly carpet, and what ugly chairs!" said Annie, casting her eyes around with a very disdainful air.

"O, hush, Miss Annie; you must not talk so!" said the woman, looking half frightened at Mrs. Morland.

"But I will talk so, and say just what I please," answered the naughty girl. "I hate the place, and I won't stay here!"

"Fie, Miss Annie! you know your dear papa has sent you here to live with your aunt until he comes back, and she will love you and be kind to you."

"I don't want her to be kind to me and love me. I want to go home with you."

"If you can be happy without love and kindness, you must be a very strange little girl," said Mrs. Morland, smiling. "But come, we will go in to tea. I think you must be hungry, at any rate."

Annie sat down to the nicely-spread table, but would scarcely taste any thing. Albert had returned, and quite got over his pet; so he coaxed her to eat some fine ripe strawberries, which he had picked from his own little garden on purpose for her; but Annie only pouted, and pushed them away from her plate.

By and by, Fido must needs pop his nose into

the room, just to remind Albert, I suppose, that dogs could be hungry as well as boys; but no sooner did Annie spy him, than she sprang up on her feet in the chair, and screamed as loud as ever she could.

"A nice playmate she will be, Minnie! cross as a little bear!" whispered Albert to his sister, as he indignantly left the table, to take away the dog again.

This uncomfortable meal was at length over, made so by the perverse and obstinate conduct of little Annie; and soon after, her aunt led her up stairs, and shewed her the pretty room in which she was to sleep, and which, she told her, was to be her own.

Such a comfortable little room as it was, opening right into her aunt's apartment! There was a pretty green and white carpet on the floor; there were white muslin curtains to the windows, looped up with green silk cord and tassels; and a bureau, and a washstand painted green and white to match the carpet; and a pretty looking-glass

over the bureau. The chairs, too, were white and green, and there was a little table with a nice white napkin upon it, and in the middle of it was a beautiful china vase filled with roses, which little Minnie had picked and arranged herself.

One could not help being perfectly charmed with such a pretty room to sleep in.

But Annie, of course, did not seem at all pleased or grateful; because she was so naughty that she was determined not to like any thing she saw, or that her aunt and cousins did for her.

Are you not sorry that the Ice King has already touched Annie's young heart? Let us hope that the spirits of the Sweet South Wind may not be far off.

"O mama, how disappointed I am!" cried Minnie Morland, as her mother came in after seeing Annie in bed; "I don't like her a bit!"

"Nor I, I am sure!" added Albert, hugging the great shaggy head of Fido to his breast. "I never saw such a cross thing as she is! I wish she would go away, if she wants so much. I

should not cry; should you, Minnie? should you, Fido?"

"Hush, my dear children; do not speak so," said Mrs. Morland. "You must not make up your minds so soon, that you do not like your cousin. I agree with you that Annie *seems* a very different little girl from what I hoped she would be; but when she gets more acquainted with us, and we with her, we shall perhaps like her very much."

"I shall never like her, I know!" said Albert: "why, how she screamed at Fido, poor fellow! Such a fuss! No, no, Fido, she shall not send you off every time you come near her, that I can tell her!"

"But, Albert, if you had only seen how she pushed me away, when I gave her my pretty new doll! I don't think it was half so bad for her to scream at Fido; do you, mama?" cried Minnie.

"Well, children, I know you have not much reason to be pleased with Annie," said Mrs. Morland. "If you had found her perfect, there

would be no virtue in liking her; so now try to love her with all her faults; then, indeed, you will do well."

"But she is so cross," cried Albert.

"And she will not speak to me," added Minnie.

"Called me a great 'ugly' boy, and pouted her lips at my strawberries," urged Albert.

"And says she hates us all," sobbed Minnie outright.

"I know it, my dear children. Now, let us see if we cannot make her love us," Mrs. Morland said. "You must not forget that Annie's poor mother was sick for a long, long time, and probably the little girl has either been left to her own self-will, or, what is perhaps worse, been under the influence of improper persons. This is a great misfortune; but is not, I hope, without a remedy. Although her manners are so very rude and disagreeable, your little cousin Annie may after all have a very kind heart."

"True, mama, so she may; and if she did

not scowl so, she would be very pretty, wouldn't she?" said Albert.

"What beautiful long curls she has! I wish my hair was as pretty," cried Minnie.

"And what red cheeks!" Albert added.

"Yes, and her eyes are as blue as yours!" said Minnie.

"It seems, then, you find little Annie very pretty," said Mrs. Morland, smiling; "well, let us hope, then, my dear children, that her beauty may be really her least attraction."

The next morning, long before Annie awoke, the woman who came with her left the village to return home. Mrs. Morland thought it best she should do so, in order to spare the little girl the pain of parting. When Annie opened her eyes, she called loudly for Jane; and upon being told that she was gone, nothing could exceed her—I really do not know whether to say grief or anger; for she shrieked and screamed at a terrible rate, seeming to be more angry than sorry—would not let her aunt or her cousins come near her, and

indeed behaved very badly, spending the most of the morning kicking and crying upon the bed.

That was a hard day indeed, not only for Albert and Minnie, but for Mrs. Morland herself. The children were very sorry for her, for they thought how bad they should feel if they were taken from their own home and left among strangers, and therefore they did every thing they could think of to amuse her; and Fido was shut up in the barn, poor fellow! the most of the day, lest he might cause some fresh disturbance to the wilful child.

On his part, for Annie's entertainment, Albert brought forward his rabbits, and his little fawn, and made his little bantam perch on his finger, flap his white wings, and crow. Minnie ran up stairs, and brought down all her choicest playthings; but finding her little cousin would take no notice of them, she coaxed the old cat to let her have her four cunning little kittens to shew her. Pussy very obligingly said "*miow*," which of course meant "yes;" and so in came Minnie,

holding the little creatures carefully in her apron.

"O, the ugly things! Do take them away!" cried Annie, lifting her hand, and striking the poor little black-and-white kitten upon its head.

"O Annie, how can you!" said Minnie, almost crying, as she hastily ran back to the old cat, and deposited the little brood safe in the basket.

She then offered to show Annie pictures out of the great books in the library. No; Annie hated all pictures. Would she play at any game? No, Annie hated all games. Would she like to walk in the garden? No. Would she like to go into the fields and run about? No.

Finding, at length, all their patient efforts to please Annie without success, with a sad and puzzled look at their mother, Albert and Minnie took their books and sat down to read.

The next day, and the next, I am sorry to say, Annie behaved no better. Her cousins were perfect patterns of good nature, and continued

their efforts to make her happy. It was of no use. She sulked all day, screamed as bad as ever if Fido came near her, and spoke in a very improper manner to her kind aunt. Mrs. Morland herself was nearly discouraged, and sometimes almost regretted that she had undertaken so great a charge. The example, too, of such a child as Annie she felt would be bad for her own children, especially for little Minnie. Then she was a perfect torment to poor Albert; all his favourite pursuits were interrupted by her wilfulness; and indeed Mrs. Morland had very great reason to fear that the naturally cheerful and pleasant tempers of both her children might be soured by such constant trials as they were exposed to through Annie's peevishness.

A week passed with no better results; but Mrs. Morland loved the motherless little girl with all her faults; while the gentle spirits dwelling in her breast bade her persevere, and rescue poor little Annie from the power of the Ice King.

Monday morning Mrs. Morland called Annie

to her, and, smoothing her pretty golden curls, she said,—

"I am very sorry, my dear little Annie, that you are not more happy with us. I am afraid it is your own fault, for I am very sure that your cousins have done all they could to amuse you, and to make you feel contented and happy. I can no longer allow them to give up so much of their time to you. They must now resume their studies and other employments, which I allowed them to put aside for your pleasure. You can join them in their studies, if you wish, and in their play hours: at nine we shall go into the library."

"I don't want to go. I cannot bear to study!" pouted Annie.

"Very well, Annie, I shall not compel you at present to follow my rules," said her aunt; "but I am very, very sorry to hear you say that you do not like to study. I am afraid your dear papa would be very much grieved if he knew it."

The tears stood in Annie's eyes as her aunt said this, for she loved her papa; but she was so very naughty and stubborn, that she would not give up; so she only shrugged her shoulders, and said she was sure she did not care.

Never in all her life had little Annie Leslie felt so lonely as she did that morning after Albert and Minnie had gone with their mother into the library; for although she refused to play with her cousins, it was some pleasure to this naughty girl to have them to fret at and find fault with. What to do with herself she did not know. She did not like to read, and of all things she hated sewing. She missed Albert's good-humoured laugh, and little Minnie's pleasant smile; and she now thought she should really like to have them come and play with her.

At last Annie walked out into the garden; there she picked all Minnie's prettiest flowers, just for mischief, because she threw them right away; and for mischief, too, she trampled down Albert's strawberry-bed. Then she thought she

would go and look at the little chickens; but the old hen made a great fuss—cried out, "*Cluck, cluck, cluck;*" and when Annie stooped down to catch one of her little chicks, she flew at her sun-bonnet in such a fury, that the old red cock and all his family came in great haste to inquire what the matter was; but the turkey-cock declared he would not have such a noise in the poultry-yard; so he spread out his tail with a grand flourish, and with an angry "*Gobble, gobble, gobble,*" he chased Annie up and down the yard, and all the way out of the gate, screaming and crying with terror. Fido, who lay very composedly under the shade of the old elm-tree, winked his eye lazily, and lolled out his tongue with great satisfaction, as he saw Annie's fright. He was a polite dog, and would, no doubt, have gone to the assistance of any other little girl, and remonstrated with Sir Gobbler upon his rudeness; but Fido felt that he had not been treated as a dog should be, and therefore, as Annie ran swiftly past him, he thought it rather a good joke to

growl and show his white teeth, although he would not have hurt the little girl for any consideration.

Several days passed on. Annie saw her little cousins cheerful and happy, apparently just as much interested in learning their lessons as they were in their sports, and many and many a time she wished she felt as happy as they did. She could not help seeing that it was her own fault, and knew there was nothing which prevented her enjoyment but her own stubborn will; and yet she was so naughty that she would not yield, but continued to go moping and fretting about. Sometimes indeed, but rarely, she suffered herself to be amused, and for a little while would play very pleasantly with her cousins; but these occasions were so infrequent that they gave no satisfaction either to Albert or Minnie. They began at length to tire of Annie's whims, and held long talks together not very flattering to their little cousin; and by mutual consent they soon resolved to let her entirely alone. Day after day, there-

fore, they arranged their little sports, and took long and pleasant walks into the woods and fields, without the least reference to little Annie, who was thus left to seek her own amusements. When she noticed this, it made her feel very unhappy and ashamed, for she knew she deserved it, and that she had not treated her cousins as she ought to have done. She became more gentle in her manners, seemed more desirous to please her aunt, and one day she even went so far as to offer Minnie her own beautiful wax-doll, which could open and shut its eyes. Minnie looked up wonderingly, and then, very much pleased, she took the doll to play with; but as she thought it was only a sudden whim of Annie's, it made no difference in her feelings, and she soon ran off to join her brother, leaving her little cousin once more alone.

Mrs. Morland had been a silent observer of all that was passing, and although she was sorry to see this almost total alienation of the children, she began also to feel some encouragement; for

she saw that the ill-nature and obstinacy of Annie was gradually wearing away. She could not really blame Albert and Minnie, either, for keeping so entirely away from their cousin, for she knew they had both been very patient and kind to the little girl; yet she did not think it was right to encourage them in slighting her, particularly as she saw that it made the child unhappy. So one evening she said to them,—

"My dear children, I have a little story to tell you; should you like to hear it?"

"A story! yes, indeed, dear mama; I do love to hear you tell stories," exclaimed Albert.

"And so do I," said little Minnie; "will you tell it now, mama?"

"Yes, but first let us go into the piazza, the moon is so beautiful, and there is such a pleasant breeze."

So Mrs. Morland took her seat, and the children gathered around her. Albert sat down at her feet, Minnie drew a little bench close to her side, while Annie stood near, leaning against one

of the pillars, the soft moonbeams resting upon her face, and the sprays of the fragrant honeysuckle waving about her head.

"My story," said Mrs. Morland, "I shall call

THE DOG AND THE BEAR.

"Once upon a time—"

"Yes, that's it—how delightful!" cried Minnie, clapping her little hands; "that is the way I love to have stories begin—'*Once upon a time.*' O Albert, won't it be nice!"

Mrs. Morland smiled, and commenced again:

"Well, once upon a time, there was a large ship sailing across the Indian Ocean. She was bound for China, and on board of this fine noble vessel were a great black bear and a dog. The dog, to be sure, was an old sailor, and had made several voyages; but it was the first trip of the bear, and the captain of the ship was taking him to China, as a present to an old mandarin, who lived in Canton.

"Now, between these two animals, the dog and the bear, there was a great deal of ill-feeling: there was nothing about them in common, and they never passed each other on the deck, or any where else, without shewing their dislike, the dog by growling, and the bear by snapping his white teeth. The captain would sometimes set them fighting, though he took good care to separate them before they could hurt each other; and often would chain them together by a short iron chain, and make them run around the deck, the bear trying to go one way, and the dog the other; but as the bear was the strongest, the poor dog was dragged along, very much against his will, just where the other pleased to go. Well, one day, while they were chained in this uncomfortable manner, they seated themselves, as if by tacit consent, near a coil of ropes, and the captain, who happened to be walking the quarter-deck, was surprised to hear something like a conversation going on between them. Curious to know what these two creatures could be saying,

he leaned over the side of the vessel, pretending to be watching the beautiful waves, and the great porpoises, which every moment came tumbling by, though in reality he was listening to the dog and the bear. So he heard the bear say in reply to some remark which the dog had just made,—

"'Perhaps you are right; but I cannot help it. I do not like you, and I never shall like you; and let me tell you, Mr. Dog, if I could but catch you in the woods, I would very soon show you the difference between a *dog* and a bear.'

"'That may be, Sir Bruin,' answered the dog; 'and upon my honour,' (and here he laid his paw upon his heart)—'upon my honour there is no love lost between us, and I think the difference you speak of could soon be settled on land!' whereupon he gave his tail a most important whisk, and elevated his nose high in the air.

"'You do not intend to say, I hope, that *you* could master *me*!' said the bear, standing upon his hind legs, and shewing his teeth.

"'I say nothing, I boast nothing,' the dog

replied. 'There is something in your black shaggy hide, your long sharp nails, and in your disposition, very repugnant to the honest feelings of a dog. But now, Sir Bruin, I am older than you, and my experience has taught me that animals are often so situated as to be forced to associate with those whom they dislike as much, probably, as *we* dislike each other; and I believe this is also the case with mankind. I judge from what a dog's life has shewn me. Now this is exactly our case, and yet we cannot escape each other; we meet in our daily walks about the ship, we meet in the night-watch, and we meet at the caboose when we go for our meals; and, what is worse, the captain often cruelly chains us together as we are now. Then, let me ask you, what is the use of our quarrelling all the time, and making ourselves even more disagreeable to each other than nature intended? Suppose, then, that we agree, for the rest of the time we are to live together, to go along peaceably and in good fellowship? What say you?'

"'With all my heart,' answered Bruin; 'for what you say sounds like good sense. Yet, should we meet on shore, we will—ha, you understand me!' and the bear shook his head, and grinned fiercely.

"'Oh, I take your meaning, friend,' replied the dog; 'here is my paw upon it. But until then, let us try to make our voyage together pleasant. Our natures, it is true, are very unlike, as also our education; yet I do not see why we cannot study to make ourselves agreeable and friendly. Ah, Bruin,' the dog continued, with a melancholy shake of his head, 'I have lived long enough to know that there is not too much comfort in the world, and I have learned, too, that we make a great deal of our unhappiness ourselves. I shall hereafter endeavour to conform, as much as I can, to whatever situation I am placed in. Once more I say, Sir Bruin, since we are compelled to live together, let us try to make each other happy. Give us your paw!'

"The bear gave a short complacent growl,

and extended his paw, taking care to draw in his long, sharp nails. The dog shook it very cordially, and then, stretching themselves out on the deck side by side, they were soon asleep; and the captain walked away, determined also to profit by the lesson learned from the dog and the bear."

"I think I know what you mean by this story, mama," said Albert, looking up archly into Mrs. Morland's face.

"So do I," said Minnie; "do you, Annie?"

Annie blushed, and hung down her head for a moment.

"Yes, I think I know what aunt means."

"Then, my dear children," said Mrs. Morland, "if you all understand the meaning of my story, can you not do as well as the dog and the bear?"

Albert and Minnie laughed merrily at this.

"Yes, yes, we will try, mama."

"Then kiss and be friends; and I hope I shall

never again see any thing but harmony between my three children."

But little Annie held back: she looked first at her aunt, then at her cousins; the tears came swelling to her eyes; and then, throwing herself into her aunt's arms, she said,—

"O, my dear aunt, I have been a very naughty girl! I wonder how you can be so kind and good to me, and Albert and Minnie too! O, I will never be so bad again! I will try to be your own little girl, aunt; yes, I will, if you will only forgive me!"

"Yes, Annie, you have indeed been a very naughty child, but I am glad to find you willing to acknowledge your faults. If you are really sorry—and I believe you are—you will now try to do better. We all love you very much, my dear little girl," continued Mrs. Morland, pressing her to her bosom and kissing her, "and I shall be very, very happy to return my dear Annie to her papa cured of those faults which have caused her little cousins here, and her aunt,

so much grief. Yes, Annie, I forgive you, and you shall be my dear little girl."

By this time Minnie was crying too, and kissing Annie's cheek; while Albert, with his arms thrown around both, was patting their heads and kissing them by turns.

Fido, disturbed by all this, got up from his bed of moonshine, shook himself to be certain that he was really awake, and then, walking gravely up to the party, inserted his cold nose within that wreath of loving little arms; and as Annie rose from her aunt's shoulder, she saw him as he stood there wagging his tail, and looking, on the whole, rather sheepish.

"Ah! Fido, Fido, I know I have been a bear to you, poor fellow. Come, let's be friends, will you? 'Give us your paw.'" And Fido, as if he perfectly understood her, laughed as only a dog can laugh, and put his great shaggy paw in her hand.

"Hurra! hurra for the dog and the bear!" cried Albert, leaping over the balustrade down

into the dewy grass. "Follow me, Annie; come, Minnie; now for a run in the garden by the bright moonlight. Oh, I am so happy! Come, Fido, come along, old fellow!" And then, as the little girls sprang to his side, he caught Annie in his arms, gave her another hearty kiss, and then away went all three bounding down the walk, with Fido jumping and frolicking after them.

From that evening Ill-humour and Self-will, the two spirits of evil which the Ice King had sent into the heart of little Annie, gradually disappeared. Not all at once did they take their departure, for they had dwelt there a long time, and many a hard struggle did they have to maintain their rule; but at length they vanished, and the gentle sister spirits, Kindness and Amiability, favourites of the Sweet South Wind, took up their abode in the breast of the little girl.

CASPAR AND THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK.

It was Caspar Thorne's birthday; and such a fine pleasant morning had not been seen for a long time as that which greeted the little boy's eyes as he opened them upon this, his ninth birthday. The sun was shining brightly through the windows, and, glancing across the looking-glass, as if to snatch a glimpse of its own beauty, peeped with a broad smile right into the face of Caspar, as much as to say, "Come, it is time you were up." And up Caspar sprang, with a merry shout, and ran to the window.

How beautiful every thing looked! The trees were all glittering with the drops which the long summer rain had hid in their bright green leaves, and the dear little birds were flitting about among the branches, shaking their wings with gladness,



Caspar and the Little Hunchback

and pouring the sweetest music from their little throats. Wreaths of snowy clouds were chasing each other over the beautiful blue sky; and the tall grass and the bright flowers bent to the loving kiss of the summer wind.

"Oh, what a pleasant, pleasant day!" cried Caspar; "now I can go to uncle Nathan's."

Then rapidly putting on his clothes, he ran down stairs and out into the garden, where already his mother was weeding her flower-beds. Mrs. Thorne playfully gave Caspar nine little taps upon his rosy cheek, and then nine sweet kisses to mark his birthday, Caspar struggling and laughing all the time, and pretending that he wanted to get away from her.

Now his father and mother had promised him that if the weather was pleasant, and he was a good boy, he might pass the day at his uncle Nathan's, a farmer who lived about three miles from the town. But every day for a week it had done nothing but rain, rain, rain; rain in the morning when Caspar awoke, rain at noon when

he ate his dinner, and rain at night when he went to bed; rain, rain, drip, drip, patter, patter, patter against the window-panes. Poor Caspar was almost discouraged, so far as the weather was concerned. As for the second requirement of his parents, that he must be a good boy, he felt pretty sure that he was safe, as he had done all he could to merit their approbation; for a visit to Woodland farm was indeed a happiness worth striving for.

How very glad then he was, when, this morning, he found the dreary rain was over, and the beautiful sunshine had taken its place!

As soon as Caspar had finished his breakfast, he prepared to set out upon his pleasant walk to Woodland. Old John, the gardener, was to go with him part of the way, as Caspar was not much acquainted with the road, having been allowed to go there but seldom.

"Now, be very sure, Caspar, that you leave your uncle Nathan's before sunset, so that you can get home before dark; for we shall not

be able to send for you to-night," said Mrs. Thorne.

"Pooh! my dear, don't make a baby of the boy. Why, if he could not find his way from Woodland even in the dark, I should call him rather stupid—eh, Caspar!" added Mr. Thorne.

Caspar laughed, and said he was sure there was no fear of him; and then, kissing his father and mother, he bounded away down the green and shady lane, and was soon lost to sight.

Poor old John could hardly keep pace with the active speed of the little boy, and was very glad when they arrived within half a mile of Woodland, as there he was to leave Caspar, and might take his own slow, steady gait homeward.

"Well, good-bye, my little master," said John. "Now, remember the road, will you? Don't forget the turn to the left, and mind and start for home long before sunset."

"Good-bye, John. *Ha, ha, ha!* Why I could find the way back blindfolded. Don't you be afraid. Give my love to mother. Good-bye!"

cried Caspar; and waving his hand, he ran gaily along the side of the road, scaring the butterflies up from the little flowers nestling in the high grass, and making the grasshoppers hop about at a great rate.

Very soon he saw uncle Nathan's old brown house peeping out from a pretty grove of fine old trees. Then he heard the lowing of cattle, and the tinkling of bells, and saw a drove of uncle Nathan's cows browsing on a hill-side at a little distance; next he heard the voices of men in the fields, crying "*Gee whoa! gee up!*" and sure enough, there was uncle Nathan himself, and cousin John, ploughing in the very next field. But they did not see Caspar, they were so busy, although he jumped up on top of the rail-fence, and shouted, and waved his cap to attract their notice. So he ran on until he reached the gate, which opened upon the fine large yard studded with old shady trees, and in the centre of which stood the farm-house, with its broad mossy roof and low drooping eaves, with the swallows skim-

ming about the chimney-tops, and the noisy martins quarrelling in their snug little house below.

His little cousins, James and Sarah, were playing "hide and seek" among the lilac-bushes; but as soon as they saw him, they left their play, and ran, with merry shouts, to meet him; then they seized him by each hand, and dragged him along through the high grass into the dairy, where his aunt was busily employed.

"Here is Caspar, mother! here is Caspar!" shouted the children; and a hearty welcome did the little boy receive from his good aunt.

Never did any thing taste so nice as the great slice of bread and butter which she put into his hand; and then such milk! Caspar was convinced that uncle Nathan's cows were different from any other cows, and he meant to speak to his father about it.

I do not think that any little boy was ever happier than Caspar that day, his birthday. The hours flew very swiftly. His cousins had a great many things to show him—the pet lamb, the

little white calf, the new brood of goslings, the cunning little ducks, and the guinea-pigs. Then Caspar must go into the woods, and see the pretty robin's nest which James had found; and Sarah too had a nest to show him; but hers was hid away down in the bulrushes which grew around the pond in the meadow. When his uncle and cousin John came in from the field, they shook hands with the little boy, and said he was almost big enough for a ploughboy. Then they gave him a ride upon the old horse, which so much pleased Caspar, that his uncle told him he might have the little foal he saw in the barn for his own, and that he would take care of it for him until it was old enough to break, and then Caspar might have it, and ride it whenever he pleased. Good uncle Nathan!

But see, the sun is almost down! Caspar must go; yet still he lingers at the door, after he has kissed his aunt and wished all "good-bye"— he lingers at the gate, for he cannot bear to turn his back upon dear delightful Woodland. His

cousins walked with him as far as the line of the farm extended, and then, kissing each other a dozen times, with as many "good-bye's" from each, they parted, and Caspar found himself alone.

About half way between Woodland and the village, the road branched off in two directions; the left leading to the town, the other to a lonely wood.

After parting with his little cousins, Caspar ran along singing gaily to himself, and thinking what a pleasant day he had spent, and wishing he might visit James and Sarah, and good uncle Nathan more frequently, and of what his father would say when he should tell him about the beautiful foal.

A little squirrel skipped nimbly along the fence just before him, and Caspar had a mind to try his speed too; so he started off at a full run —the squirrel now and then stopping, as if to let the little boy come up with him, and then, just as Caspar got almost to him, he would wave his tail,

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leap down on the stones, scamper along over the ground, and then again, perching himself upon the rails, very gravely wait, with his little fore paws held up to his nose, for the approach of his rival racer.

So intent was Caspar upon this sport, that he did not notice when he came to the turn of the roads, and unfortunately continued on the right hand, which led to the woods. But by and by, when he was tired of the chase, he looked around him, and found he was in a strange place; he had already reached the entrance to that deep wood.

Caspar was very much surprised and frightened, for he saw, too, that the sun was already down, and the twilight deepening. He turned hastily to retrace his steps, and get back into the right road; but in his confusion and hurry he again went wrong, taking a path which led him still deeper into the wood. At every step he was more and more bewildered—the trees grew thicker, and the underbrush soon choked up every trace of a path. Caspar now began to weep, and call

loudly for assistance; but nobody appeared to hear him, and the poor boy went on plunging deeper and deeper into the wood.

Now he could see a few stars shining away up above the tree-tops, and sometimes a ray of moonlight shot through the branches; but still it was growing very, very dark in that lonely wood. At the foot of a large oak, which stood where the trees did not grow so thick together, and where the light of the moon made it less lonely, the poor little fellow now crouched down, weeping and trembling with grief and terror.

How sadly his pleasant day had terminated! and when he thought of his dear father and mother, of his home, and of Woodland, and that perhaps he should never see his dear parents or those pleasant places again, he sobbed most bitterly. He tried to say his prayers aloud, but his voice sounded so strange in that solitude, that he dared not; so he *thought over all the prayers and hymns his mother had taught him*, and in doing so his tears almost ceased to flow, and he

felt sure he should not be left to perish in that dismal place.

While he sat thus still sobbing—hark! he suddenly hears a noise among the bushes. Tramping and crashing, on it comes, nearer and nearer. What can it be? Perhaps some wild beast! Oh, poor little Caspar, he dares not look up or around him; but stooping his head between his knees, the cold sweat stands on his brow, and his little frame shakes with terror.

Something brushes by him, and then a hand, touching the shoulder of the little boy, gently shakes him:—

"Hillo, little fellow! are you asleep? What are you doing here?"

Oh, how delighted Caspar was to hear a human voice! He raised his head quickly, and then he was almost frightened again; for standing before him, plainly revealed in the moonlight which shone brightly around the old oak, he saw a little figure not more than three feet high, with a large hump upon its back, and long thin arms

nearly reaching to the ground! No wonder that Caspar was frightened at the sudden appearance of such a strange little figure in that lonely place.

Now he had read a great many fairy tales, and wonderful stories about giants and goblins, and about little men called dwarfs, who lived in hollow trees and caves, and who sometimes showed themselves to travellers to do them mischief; and he had no doubt this was one of those same little creatures.

But although frightened, he could not help thinking the company even of a fairy or a dwarf, in that old lonely wood, was better than none at all; and notwithstanding that great hump upon his back, the face of the little man looked very kind and pleasant.

"What are you doing here, little boy?" again asked the dwarf.

Little Caspar clasped his hands together, and falling on his knees, cried,—

"Oh, don't hurt me, good Mr. Fairy! I am a poor little boy, and I have lost my way. Please

be so good as to show me the path out of the woods!"

The little figure burst into a hearty laugh.

"Why, what do you take me for? I am no fairy. Come, that's clever. *Ha, ha, ha!* My name is Bill Baily, and I live with my mother and my grandfather, away off yonder in the forest. Who are you? and where do you live?"

"And are you really, really a boy like me?" said Caspar, touching him with his finger, and feeling his hand: "are you really? I thought you looked so, so funny!"

"*Funny!* Oh, yes, I am humpbacked, I know, and not very big," replied the boy, good humouredly. "I don't wonder you were frightened; but never mind, I won't hurt you. What is your name?"

"Caspar Thorne."

"O, I know. I have heard of Squire Thorne. Well, it is too late to go home to-night; so you must come along to mother's with me, and in the morning I will show you the way to the village."

Then the little hunchback led Caspar further into the woods, when pretty soon they came to a path where the trees were not so thick, and where the brushwood had been cleared away. The moon shone very bright, and Caspar could not help staring again and again at the queer little boy who walked beside him. Bill told him he was fourteen, but his head scarcely reached to Caspar's waist, and seemed to be placed as it were in the middle of his breast.

In about half an hour, they arrived at a small house built of wood. Bill pushed the door open softly, and Caspar followed him in.

A woman sat at a small table sewing. She looked very pale and sick. Close by the fire, although the night was warm, an old man was sitting, wrapped in a blanket, and apparently sleeping.

"Here is a little boy, mother, who has lost his way in the woods," said the hunchback.

"Poor little fellow, were not you very much frightened?" said the woman, looking at Caspar

very kindly. "Sit down, my dear. Where did you find him, Bill?"

"Why, you see, mother, the moon was so bright, I thought I would just go down and look after my fox-trap; well, as I was going along, all at once I heard a strange sort of a cry for the woods; it sounded to me like a child; so I kept on, and what should I find but this little fellow, sitting all in a heap, and crying under a tree. But the best of it is, mother, he took me for something strange; a fairy, or something of that sort, and was afraid of me, and put up his little hands, and begged me not to hurt him. *Ha, ha, ha!*"

The woman smiled sadly as Bill said this, and the tears stood in her eyes.

"Well, well, never mind!" said she, kissing him.

"Oh, I don't mind it, mother!" answered the little hunchback, laughing and shaking Caspar's hand. "I am ugly enough, I know, to be thought almost any thing."

"But you are a good boy, Bill; and what would your poor old grandfather or I do without you, I wonder?"

Then, going to a little cupboard, she brought out a bowl of milk and some coarse bread, and setting them down on the table before Caspar, begged he would eat.

But the poor little boy could not taste a morsel, he felt so bad, and began to weep bitterly; for he was thinking of his own dear mother, and how unhappy she must feel because he did not come home, and how anxious she must be about him. The good woman tried to comfort him all she could, and so did Bill; and she promised him that in the morning, just as soon as it was light, he should go home. Then she made him up a nice little bed in one corner of the room, and Caspar lay down and tried to go to sleep. But he could not; so for a long time he lay watching what was going on.

First he saw the woman go up to the old man, and putting her arms gently around him,

little white calf, the new brood of goslings, the cunning little ducks, and the guinea-pigs. Then Caspar must go into the woods, and see the pretty robin's nest which James had found; and Sarah too had a nest to show him; but hers was hid away down in the bulrushes which grew around the pond in the meadow. When his uncle and cousin John came in from the field, they shook hands with the little boy, and said he was almost big enough for a ploughboy. Then they gave him a ride upon the old horse, which so much pleased Caspar, that his uncle told him he might have the little foal he saw in the barn for his own, and that he would take care of it for him until it was old enough to break, and then Caspar might have it, and ride it whenever he pleased. Good uncle Nathan!

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For several weeks he thought often of the little hunchback, and would beg his father to let him go and see him. But Mr. Thorne had never any spare time to go with him; so he put him off with a "one of these days." At length Caspar began to think less and less of his kind little preserver; and as new pleasures and new pursuits came in his way, his interest in the little hunchback, and his gratitude, faded alike.

More than a year passed on. Caspar was now nearly eleven, and had grown tall and manly. But he had also grown proud, and with pride came selfishness and vanity. Mr. Thorne was a rich man, and Caspar knew it; he had been told so to flatter him; and he knew that few of his school-fellows had as many fine things as himself. He was better dressed too; and so day by day the spirit of pride and vanity grew stronger. It can hardly seem possible, but it is a fact, Caspar really began to look down with something like contempt upon his little cousins at pleasant Woodland; and when he went there, he

strutted about the farm with the consequential air of a young bantam, which made him appear very ridiculous.

In the course of the summer Mr. Thorne had business in Boston, and was absent from home several weeks. When he returned he brought with him two young lads on a visit to Caspar, who was now more elated than ever to shew off his city friends, with their gold watches and fine French boots.

One afternoon the three boys, in company with several others of their own age, went out to play at ball, and were enjoying themselves greatly in this favourite and healthy sport, when suddenly one of them cried out:

"Ha, ha, boys! look there! What animal is that creeping along yonder, by the side of the fence? Let's fire into him!" aiming the ball as he spoke.

All the boys shouted as they looked in the direction pointed out, and Caspar as loud as the rest; but his face grew very red, for he recog-

nised at once, in the object of their mirth, Bill Baily, the little hunchback.

"Hillo! what will you take for your pack?" cried one.

"Give us a ride on your trunk!" sang out another.

"Get on top of the fence, Beauty, and let me draw your portrait!" exclaimed a third.

And now what did Caspar do?

Not what he should have done. Instead of checking the rudeness of his companions, and greeting the poor little boy with kindness, he laughed and clapped his hands at their unfeeling sport.

Ah, the Ice Spirits were doing their work bravely in the heart of Caspar!

Bill took no notice whatever of these rude boys, but walking up to Caspar, said, while the tears gathered in his eyes:

"Caspar Thorne, you cannot have forgotten me, for I have not changed; you have grown a great deal, and yet I should know you anywhere!"

"Know *you!* Ha! ha! Why, where did you come from? out of the ground like a double-sided potato?" cried Caspar, trying to look very bold and impudent.

"Have you forgotten the night when you were lost in the woods, and I found you crying under a tree?" asked Bill.

"Did it get lost in the woodsy, poor baby? Did it cry, and did Beauty find it?" cried one of the city lads in a mocking tone, and chucking Caspar under the chin.

This vexed Caspar very much.

"He lies!" he exclaimed. "I never saw him before!"

Bill turned away; then stopping a moment, he said, looking the wicked boy reproachfully in the face:

"I have not forgotten my promise, Caspar Thorne, made when we sat on that old stump by the roadside; you have yours! My mother and my grandfather are dead, and I came to you to find a friend, as I said I would. But no matter.

Good-bye, Caspar. God will soon take me from the world!"

Every word which the little hunchback uttered so gently, and looking so sad, went to the heart of Caspar like a knife, and he turned away, his cheek and brow crimsoned with shame.

The boys, too, felt sorry for their cruel mocking of the unfortunate Bill, and one of them exclaimed:

"Come, let's make up a purse for the hunchback,—fourpence apiece, boys; come, fourpence, all of you!" and Caspar, among the rest, took out some pennies and some small silver, and offered it to the unhappy boy.

But Bill walked slowly away, refusing to take it.

Yet, with all his sorrow and misery, the feelings of the little hunchback were enviable, when compared with those of Caspar. Ah, more unhappy now was that wicked, ungrateful boy than the poor deformed!

He went home feeling like a criminal. All

his fine spirits were gone. He could no longer enjoy the sports of his companions; his supper remained untasted before him; and complaining of a bad headache, he went early to bed, but not to sleep! No, Caspar could not sleep; he seemed to see before him all the time, the pale, sorrowful face of the hunchback, and to hear the words, "*Good-bye, Caspar. God will soon take me from the world!*"

Then, as he lay there tossing upon his uneasy bed, he thought of the night when he was lost in that dreary wood, and of his misery and fright as he sat under the old oak; and then he remembered, when Bill spoke to him so kindly, and led him along through the woods, how his heart leaped with joy and thankfulness. He recollected, too, that parting with the little hunchback, at the old stump by the roadside; and how he had promised Bill that he would love him and be a friend to him when he should be all alone in the world; and that when Bill had said to him, "*I am afraid you will be ashamed of me,*" how boldly

he had declared *no*, that he never could feel ashamed of him; and yet he had not only been so wicked as to do this, but had also called him a liar, and scoffed at him!

And now Caspar began to weep bitterly, for he felt very, very wretched; and no wonder, for he had not only been guilty of the basest ingratitude, but had added to it the sin of falsehood and of insult! Again Caspar seemed to hear the voice of the poor friendless boy, crying, "*Good-bye, Caspar. God will soon take me from the world.*"

Now while, with sighs and tears, he was thus bitterly repenting of his wickedness, the beautiful spirits of the Sweet South Wind came floating in the soft moonlight, and hovered lovingly around the pillow of the little boy, smiling upon him, and fanning his fevered brow with their snowy pinions. Caspar knew not of their glad presence, although it was their gentle voices bade him go in search of the poor forlorn hunchback, and asking pardon for his cruelty, bring him home, and be to him the friend he had promised; and as he

listened to their healthful promptings, his heart burst from the frigid fetters of the Ice King.

Then the sweet spirits sang to him gently, as it might be the song of angels over a redeemed soul; and Caspar soon fell into a peaceful slumber.

At the dawn of day Caspar awoke, and the spirits of the Sweet South Wind were yet smiling upon him. Hastily dressing himself the penitent boy left the house, and went in search of poor Bill. He took the road leading to the wood, and made such speed that he soon found himself in the forest. He had not proceeded very far, when, to his great joy, he discovered the object of his search sitting upon the ground, with his head resting against the trunk of a fallen tree. He was asleep; and Caspar, sitting down softly beside him, began to weep afresh as he looked upon the pale haggard countenance of the unfortunate.

With a deep sigh Bill soon awoke. Then Caspar, throwing his arms around him, kissed him, and begged forgiveness for his very wicked conduct; and he told him he had now come to

take him home with him, and that he was going to ask his father to let him live with them always.

But for a long time the desolate boy refused to listen to Caspar; he told him those rude boys he saw with him the day before would again insult him.

"If they dare to make fun of you, Bill, I will fight every one of them!" cried Caspar, strong in his good resolution.

Bill then urged that perhaps Caspar himself might sometimes feel ashamed to acknowledge an acquaintance with such a poor misshapen object as he was. But the spirits of the Sweet South Wind assured Caspar that if they dwelt with him, he would never again be so base; and Caspar told Bill so.

His entreaties finally prevailed; and leading the little hunchback by the hand, he soon reached home.

The family were at breakfast. Still holding the hand of Bill, Caspar entered the room, and,

going directly to his father, said, "Father, this is the kind boy who found me the night I got lost in the woods. He came to me yesterday; but I was so wicked and ungrateful that I pretended not to know him, and made fun of him, and drove him away. I am sorry for it; I am ashamed of it. Bill has no friends, no home, father, in the world. I want him to live here with us; and I will be kind to him, and will never see him insulted."

Mr. Thorne could not but admire the noble spirit of his son; and shaking hands with Bill, he said:

"Yes, my little friend, you shall live with us, and we will try to make you happy. Caspar, your request is granted. Your conduct yesterday was unworthy of you; it was base, unmanly, wicked; nor can you atone for it by this one act of generosity. Let your continued friendship and kindness to this friendless boy mark your contrition."

The young friends of Caspar, who sat at the

table, were heartily ashamed of their behaviour the day before. They rose up, and, shaking hands with Bill, confessed their regret, and asked pardon of the despised little hunchback.

And this proved a lesson to them which they never forgot.


The Disobedient Little Squirrels

THE DISOBEDIENT LITTLE SQUIRRELS.

In a tree as shady as tree could be
Lived Mr. Grey Squirrel and family;
And there, for three long summers or more,
Brought up his children, and laid in a store
Of nuts for winter cracking.

No squirrel could boast of a nest so fine
As Mr. Grey Squirrel, this good friend of mine;
And the best of it was, it was up so high,
Not a boy, a cat, nor a dog, could come nigh,
To stop their winter cracking.

One fine clear morning, just as the sun rose,
Mr. Squirrel awoke, and rubbing his nose,
"Ah, ha! my dear wife, make ready, I pray;
We will go to the woods, and gather to-day
The nuts for winter cracking."

Mrs. Squirrel sprang up as eager as he,
(A helpmate indeed Mrs. Squirrel was she!)
Then calling the children, she said, "Now be good,
And your father and I will bring from the wood
Fine nuts for winter cracking."

She lifted her paw, her eyes wet with tears,
And stroking them fondly, "Be careful, my dears!
Don't stir from the nest—now mind what I say—
Until we come back at the close of the day,
With nuts for winter cracking."

Each little one scraped its little hind leg,
And shaking its ears, said, "Mother, we beg
You not to be troubled; for we will be good
While father and you are gone to the wood
For nuts for winter cracking."

"Good-bye, then, my chippers; for we must be gone!"
Said Mr. Grey Squirrel: "Mrs. Squirrel, move on."

And with hop, skip, and jump, soon clearing the tree,
They were off to lay in for their family
The nuts for winter cracking.

But, alas! how sorry I am to tell
This very sad tale; and of what befell
These naughty young squirrels, at home told to stay,
While their provident parents were gone that day
For nuts for winter cracking.

For a time as happy as squirrels could be,
They played in their nest in the button-ball tree.
First whisking and frisking they scamper about,
Now hiding within it, now peeping without,
Chippering and chatting in innocent play,
As their parents requested when they went away.
At last little Bonny, the eldest, said he,
"Why, this is dull work; here is nothing to see!
It is stupid enough shut up so all day!
I'd like to be off, on the fences to play,

And cut a few capers for once without fear,
Which I never can do in this old nest here;
We have no one to speak to but Madam Redbreast,
And she makes a fuss if we go near her nest;
And all in a flutter, *Oh, pray don't!* she begs,
Dear me! as if we wanted her little blue eggs!
Besides, do you know, that my friend Katydid
Said *she* would not stay here? She did, Katydid!
And hark now, I pray, to the bob-o-link's song:
Bob—Bonny—ha, ha! where are you? come along!
It is too bad for you, and too bad for me,
To stay here all day in this button-ball tree!
So come, follow me; we will have some fine fun,
And be home again ere the set of the sun."
Thus spake naughty Bonny. Then little Bright Eye
Raised her dear little paw, heaved a sad sigh,
And patting him fondly, said, "Don't, Bonny, dear!
Indeed, it is wrong; you had better stay here!
Our dear parents' wishes pray don't disobey;
Remain in the nest, do, while they are away!"

"*Che—che!*" cried bad Bonny, with looks of contempt;
"Stay at home if you please; on a frolic I'm bent."
Then placing his paw by the side of his nose,
Said, "I hope, Miss Bright Eye, you do not suppose
You are able to rule me! Fine time of day,
When a baby like you disputes what I say;
Tells me first what is wrong and then what is right!
You are getting too saucy; indeed you are, quite.
For my own part, I long more of life to see;
And will not remain in this quiet old tree.
If, Bright Eye, you choose to stay home in the nest,
Why, you may: *che—che!* as you think you know best!
Come, Bobby; come, Bushy; come quick, follow me;
We will soon turn our tails on the button-ball tree!"
Down the tree in a trice the three squirrels ran,
And then off to the fields as fast as they can;

Perching on fences, leaping through rails,
Waving in gladness their fine bushy tails,
Chasing each other up tree and down,
Until they came near to the edge of a town:
"Look yonder!" cried Bonny; "squirrels, see there!
That must be the world we are told to beware.
Why, I'm sure it must be a most charming place:
Let's go in and view it; come, now for a race.
Ah, what a fine thing 'tis to travel, my dears!
How much I shall now know for one of my years!"
But Bobby and Bushy were hungry and tired:
"Oh, what can we eat?" they sadly inquired.
"Eat!" replies Bonny, "why, look at that tree;
Fruit riper and rarer I never did see!
No squirrel, I am sure, could wish to dine
On apples more tempting, so rosy and fine!
Che—che! I am sure 'tis all nonsense we hear
About spring-traps and guns,—there is nothing to fear;
And the talk about dogs, it's all in my eye,
And only to scare us: *che—che!* let them try!

How lucky it is we came out to-day:
It would have been foolish at home to stay!"
As he spoke, "*Bang! bang!*" alas, Bonny fell dead,
Shot through the heart by a bullet of lead!
While Bobby and Bushy, appalled at the sight,
Leaped over the fences, screaming with fright.
But, sad to relate, Bob was bit to the bone
By an ugly great dog! And then a sharp stone,
Thrown at poor little Bushy, sore wounded his leg!
With most pitiful cries, oh, how he did beg
To go to his home in the button-ball tree,
His father, and mother, and Bright Eye to see!
But alas, poor Bushy! 'twas a dreadful doom,
To be put in a cage in that lonely room!
And a large grey cat, with eyes of fire,
Clapped her sharp claws through the iron wire!
When he felt the nails of this terrible foe,
Down his pitiful nose how the tears did flow!
And he wished he was home in that dear old nest,
And pressed quite close to his mother's soft breast.

All trembling with terror, the poor squirrel sat,
And glaring upon him the eyes of the cat;
He saw her great claws, and he felt her hot breath:
A shudder crept o'er him; he knew it was *death!*

These poor little things were but squirrels, it's true;
Yet their story, dear child, is a lesson for you;
For had they but done as their parents thought best,
To this day they might have been safe in their nest.
So when your own parents you would disobey,
The fate of these squirrels remember, I pray.



The Christmas Gathering

THE CHRISTMAS GATHERING.

"DON'T you wish to-morrow was Christmas?" said a little girl, shaking back her long flaxen ringlets, and looking up into the face of her sister Gertrude.

"Don't be so impatient, Laura. Why, if to-morrow was Christmas, you would be wishing, the day after, that Christmas was yet to come."

"Oh, no, I should not!" answered little Laura; "for only think what beautiful presents I should have to make me glad! perhaps a new doll, and some pretty books. Mama has promised me a little bureau, and Uncle Theodore——"

"A stick!" cried little Frank.

"No, indeed, Master Frank; the stick will be for you. Uncle Theodore is to give *me* a bright new florin."

"And me a Noah's ark," said little Eddie.

"And I am to have a new doll, too, and a pretty set of cups and saucers, for mama promised me!" cried another little girl, whose name was Fanny.

"I think I can tell what presents I shall have," added another, a young girl about eleven years old. "I expect to receive from Aunt Mary a beautiful new paint-box, and from mama a portfolio; and, Gertrude, I should not wonder if I had one of those splendid books from Addey's, with such pretty coloured pictures; for I saw papa bring home a parcel last night, which, I feel almost certain, contained one."

"Now, Miss Emeline," interrupted little Frank, placing himself before her with his arms a-kimbo, "let me tell you that book will be for Gertrude, won't it, Gertrude? Just as if papa would give Em' such a handsome present!"

"No, dear Frank, I tell you what I think," said Gertrude; "I think it is a present for mama."

"Oh, yes, for mama, for mama!" shouted the children, clapping their hands.

"What grand times we will have!" exclaimed little Fanny. "First we will go up into the play-room, and spread our things all out on the table; and then, when we have looked at them as much as we wish, we will play with our new dolls; won't we, Laura?"

"Yes, we will play at going a visiting. My doll shall have a party, and your doll must come to it; and we will set out our cups and saucers with candy and sugar-plums."

"And I will get on to my new rocking-horse, and ride over and sup with you," added Frank; "and then we will play some new games."

"Yes," lisped little Eddie, "and I will take all the animals out of my Noah's ark, and play mena—mena——"

"Menagerie, Eddie."

"Yes, *mangeree*."

"And perhaps I will paint you some pictures with my new paints," said Emeline.

"Oh, how I wish Christmas was come!" they all exclaimed again.

"There are a great many children," said Gertrude, as she took little Eddie upon her knee, "who have no parents or friends to give them pretty presents at Christmas, and who can hardly get even a crust of bread to eat. Don't you feel sorry for them?"

"Yes, I do," answered little Laura; "and if I knew where they lived, I would buy ever so many toys with my new florin, and give to them!" And as she said this, little Laura looked as beautiful, with her soft blue eyes and pleasant smile, as one of the spirits of the Sweet South Wind.

"Mercy, what an idea, Laura!" cried Emeline, tossing her head; "why they know nothing about Christmas, so of course it can make no difference to them! What was that you were reading last night, Gertrude? Oh, I remember:

'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise!'"

And Emeline drew herself up, and looked around with an air of great self-satisfaction.

"But I don't think there can be much bliss in having nothing but a crust of bread to eat!" cried Frank.

"Now, I will tell you what I would do," said Fanny; "I would ask all these poor little children to come up stairs into our play-room and play with us."

"Oh, you strange child!" exclaimed Emeline; "what, have those creatures handling your new dolls and playthings with their dirty fingers! Fie, Fanny!"

"I did not think of that; I should not like to have my pretty new playthings soiled," Fanny answered.

"Well, I tell you what we might do, Fanny; we might give them all our old ones," said Laura. "I am sure my baby-house is quite nice yet; mama said it was."

"And what would you do, Frank?" asked Gertrude.

"I don't know; I think it would be fun to see such a set of ragged beggars in the house. I don't know what I should do, but I should want to treat them well. I would ask mama to give them all a good dinner, I think."

"And sugar-candy," put in little Eddie.

"And I would ask the servant to open the street-door, and push them all out!" cried Emeline.

That evening, after the children were in bed, Gertrude May repeated this conversation to her mother; but no notice was taken of it until the day before Christmas really arrived. It was a beautiful bright morning, and Mrs. May and the children were all assembled in the pleasant sitting-room. Some were reading, some sewing, some playing, but all very happy in expectation of the morrow. At length, putting down her work, Mrs. May said:

"Children, I have something to say to you. Now, I want you all to listen to me very attentively; for I shall require an answer from each

one of you. But you will have all day to consider of my proposal; and this evening at bedtime you may bring me your written answers—not before."

"Dear me, mama, what can it be? You are very mysterious," said Emeline.

"You will soon know, my dear. Shall I begin? Will you all be quiet?" asked Mrs. May.

"Oh, very!" cried Fanny, placing her plump little finger upon her cherry lips.

Little Frank drew his horse and cart into one corner of the room, and told him to "*whoa*, and be quiet;" while little Eddie nestled down upon the hearth-rug, with his golden head resting on the soft fur of pussy.

"Come, dear mama, we are all ready, and mean to be very still, don't we, Fanny? don't we, Frank?" said Laura, drawing her little chair to the side of her mother, and folding her arms tightly over her doll.

"Well, my dear children, do you not think it a pleasant thing to be happy?" began Mrs. May.

"Yes, indeed we do," was the general reply.

"And to be truly happy ourselves, we should strive to make others happy; don't you think so?" Mrs. May continued.

"Yes, mama. 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you;' that was the text last Sunday morning," said little Fanny.

"You are a good little girl to remember the text so well, Fanny," said her mother, kissing her rosy cheek. "Yes, we should do unto others as we would they should do unto us; and if we follow this beautiful lesson of Jesus Christ, we may be sure we shall be happy. Now, my dear children, don't you think it must be a very sad thing to be poor, and sick, and hungry?"

"Oh, yes; I remember that poor little boy who was frozen to death in Duke Street last winter," said Laura.

"When I had the measles, I am sure I thought it was dreadful to be so poorly," added Fanny.

"And it is bad enough to be hungry, I know," cried Frank, looking very bold.

"You know very little about sickness or hunger," said Mrs. May; "for if sick, you have been nursed and watched over carefully and tenderly, and every little wish gratified; and your hunger has been but a school-room hunger. There was never a day that you could not at least have a slice of bread and butter. But this is not what I was going to say. There are a great many poor children who have scarcely any clothes, who go round upon the cold frosty pavements with bare feet, and who have nothing to eat but the broken victuals which they daily beg from door to door."

"Yes, so Gertrude says."

"Hush, Frankie, and listen to me! Now, God has been very good to you. He has given you kind parents, a good home, and food and clothing. To-morrow will be Christmas; and you are all anticipating, I doubt not, a great deal of pleasure, and expect to receive many beautiful gifts from those who love you. Is it not so?"

The children clapped their hands, while their

sparkling eyes assured Mrs. May that she had not overrated their anticipations.

"Now, are you willing to give up all your pretty presents?" said Mrs. May, looking from one to the other. "Are you willing to deny yourselves so much pleasure, in order that the money which these presents would cost may be expended in food and clothing for poor children? Can you content yourselves for another year with your old playthings? You all look very sober, I see; but you know I told you I should not ask you for an answer now. Bring them to me this evening when you are going to bed. Recollect, my dear children, that a kind, benevolent action carries with it its own reward, and that the words of our blessed Saviour were, '*Love one another,*' and '*Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.*'"

As she said this, Mrs. May went out, leaving the children together, all looking very blank at each other.

Little Frank was the first to break the unusual silence of the little group.

"Well, it is almost too bad; for I wanted my rocking-horse so much. Well, *whoa*, old pony! Come out here; you must work a little while longer," dragging out his horse and cart from the corner.

"Nonsense!" cried Emeline. "I wonder what has put such a notion into mama's head. I am not going to give my consent, children; and I am sure you will be very foolish if you do."

Little Fanny burst into tears, and sobbed out, "Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?—my nice cups and saucers—and my new doll—O dear—I broke the—leg—off my old—doll yesterday; —and her nose—is—all—O dear, dear!"

"Do stop crying, Fanny; how silly! Why, child, you are not obliged to give up your presents, you little goose!" said Emeline. "Shall you give up yours, Gertrude?"

"I think an approving conscience will be

better than the coral bracelet I was to have," Gertrude answered, with a pleasant smile. "What are you thinking of, Laura?"

"Why, I was thinking," replied the little girl, half laughing and half crying, "that, after all, our presents would not be worth enough to buy many clothes for poor children; and I was wishing that papa was richer, and that our presents would fill a great big room, heaped full, up to the top; then, indeed, it would be something to give them up."

"And I tell you what I wish," cried Frank, suddenly stopping his horse and cart, loaded with Gertrude's reels of thread,—"I wish I could catch old Santa Claus to-night; I would ask him to let all the rich children alone, and only go down the chimneys where the poor little girls and boys live."

"I do not see, for my part, why we should be asked to do such a ridiculous thing," said Emeline; "I am sure there are a great many people

richer than we are, and who will have all their beautiful presents without once thinking of poor folks. I don't see why we should trouble ourselves about a parcel of dirty, ragged children!"

"If every one thought as you do, Emeline, wretched indeed would be the lot of the poor," said Gertrude. "Could you sleep to-morrow night, if you knew that some poor little child was freezing to death, whom you might have made comfortable by practising a little self-denial?"

"Oh, don't begin to preach; I shall do as I please," was the retort of Emeline.

In the evening, Mr. and Mrs. May, with Gertrude and Emeline, sat around the table, drawn up in front of a cheerful fire. The patting of little feet was heard in the hall, and the children came to say good night, and to give in their written answers to their mother's proposal.

As each child put up a rosy mouth for a kiss, a small piece of paper was slipped into Mrs. May's hand by cunning little fingers. A tear trembled on Fanny's long curling eyelashes; but

there was a pleasant smile around her pretty mouth. Laura looked very happy, and laughed merrily, as her little hand touched her mother's. Frank came forward with a very brave air; and little Eddie, led in by the nurse, whispered as his mother kissed his chubby cheek, and parted his golden curls, "I don't care for my Noah's Ark!"

When the hour arrived for Emeline to retire, she blushed very deeply, as she kissed her mother, and with downcast eyes handing in her answer, left the room.

Christmas morning dawned as bright and joyous as the hearts of the many happy children who hailed its first beams with glad shouts of "A merry, merry Christmas!"

The breakfast-table at Mr. May's was not as noisy as usual on Christmas morning; and the little mouths had now more leisure to eat the nice warm toast, for there was less to talk about, and no beautiful toys waiting for their little hands.

But just as they rose from the table, a handsome carriage, drawn by two beautiful white

horses, stopped before the door, and Mr. May told the children to make haste and get ready, and he would give them a fine ride.

What an unexpected pleasure! and away they all ran with merry shouts, the girls for their cloaks and bonnets, and Master Frank for his velvet cap and paletot. They were soon ready, and sprang laughing into the comfortable carriage. Mr. May wrapped the nice warm rugs snugly around them; he touched the reins, and then away they swiftly went over the snow-covered road, to the merry music of the children's glad voices.

The city clocks were striking twelve as the happy party returned from their delightful ride. Oh, such a nice time as they had been having! never was any thing half so fine! and as Gertrude helped them off with their things, it was really wonderful to hear what strange sights they had seen during that few hours' drive.

Then Gertrude told them that as soon as they were warm, their mother wanted them to

come up stairs very quietly into the school-room; and as she said this, Gertrude looked so mysterious and so happy, that the children thought no more about being cold, but were all ready in a moment to accompany her. So they went up stairs, and Gertrude very gently opened the door.

And then, such a sight as met the eyes of the wondering little group, I wish was more frequently witnessed.

In the centre of the room, a large table was drawn out, covered with shawls, cloaks, hoods, mittens, gowns, aprons, and nice warm stockings and shoes; then there were also boys' coats, shirts, trousers, mittens, caps, and good strong boots; while upon a smaller table were spread out Bibles, Testaments, and primers, spelling-books, pretty story-books, and slates and pencils!

But all these things the children scarcely saw; for what astonished them more was, that all around the room, upon benches and chairs, twenty little children were seated. Some were very ragged; some had old shoes on their feet,

but no stockings; others had old torn stockings, but no shoes; and some had neither; and all of them looked very pale, and as if they were half-starved.

For several moments our little friends could not speak, they were so surprised, but stood bashfully by the door, hand in hand, looking sidewise at this strange company of little boys and girls in their school-room. But Master Frank at length, with a desperate effort, boldly advanced, holding out his chubby little red hand, and going from one to another of the ragged circle, cried,—

"How do you do? how do you do? I am glad to see you."

His example was soon followed by Laura and Fanny, though they were more shy, and spoke almost in whispers to the little girls. Emeline looked somewhat ashamed, and seated herself at the farthest corner of the room, without deigning to take the least notice of these poor children.

Very soon Mrs. May and Gertrude took all those garments from the table which were de-

signed for little girls, and carried them into an adjoining room; then they came back, and led out the little girls two and three at a time, and dressed them up nice and clean in good warm clothes. Then Mr. May called out the boys, and they too were fitted to new, comfortable clothing.

What a pretty sight it was when these twenty little boys and girls again took their seats, all looking so clean and tidy!

There was one thing in the room which Laura and Fanny could not understand, and which had terribly puzzled Master Frank, and this was a large green curtain, hanging over the recess where their baby-houses had always stood. But it was not long before the mystery was explained, for Mr. May, stepping forward just as the little ones got seated, drew it aside, and behold, there stood a beautiful Christmas-tree!

As soon as they saw it, Fanny and Laura clapped their hands for joy, and so did Frank and little Eddie; but the other children opened

their eyes in wonder, and gazed upon a tree loaded with such strange fruit as dolls and horses, pincushions, tops, sugar-plums and candy! for none of them had ever seen or heard of a Christmas-tree. But when Mrs. May told them that this beautiful tree was for them, and that they were to have all those pretty dolls and other things which were hanging upon it, then they too clapped their hands, and their eyes sparkled with a joy never felt before. Then Mrs. May told Laura and Fanny, and also little Frank, that they might gather all the things they could reach from the lower branches, and give them around to the little company, while Gertrude and herself would take those suspended upon the higher limbs. Little Eddie, standing on tiptoe, was allowed to perform his share of this pleasant work; and even Emeline, who had become interested and pleased in what was passing, came forward to offer her assistance; but her mother motioned her away.

Mortified, and really ashamed, Emeline with-

drew, for she knew that in the happy scene before her she had no part. *She* had not helped to deck the wan faces of those poor little children with bright, happy smiles! In exchange for their old ragged garments, she now saw them neatly and cleanly clad, and their cold feet made warm by nice stockings and shoes; but not through *her* means had it been done—*she* had practised no self-denial to render them happy! The pleasure caused by doing a kind, benevolent action, and which shone so brightly on the faces of her little brothers and sisters, she could not partake in; for the Ice King, with a bolt of ice, had shut in her heart from all such enjoyment!

How much Emeline now regretted her selfishness! Oh, to be the means of making others happy, by a little self-sacrifice, she thought, was worth more than to receive all the presents in the world!

In the mean time, a servant announced that the dinner was ready — a Christmas dinner for those starving children!

Mrs. May then told them all to take hold of each other's hands, two and two, and follow her down stairs; Frank very gallantly offering his to a little black-eyed girl, four years old, while Laura and Fanny, blushing and smiling, escorted two young masters, who, it must be owned, were rather shy of such new-fashioned proceedings, and were more inclined for a gallop, to see who could reach the table first. Gertrude followed, leading little Eddie; but Emeline fled to her chamber, and throwing herself upon the bed, gave way to her feelings in tears.

The door of the dining-room was thrown open; and then what a sight for the eyes of those hungry little ones! that large table spread with such nice food, all smoking hot—turkeys and chickens, good roast beef, and twenty little bowls of savoury soup; and then such a Christmas pudding was never seen; so large and round, with the plums all peeping out to look into the glad faces of the little ones!

Fanny, Frank, and Laura were allowed to

act as waiters upon the occasion, which they did with great credit to themselves, and satisfaction of their guests, who, although rather frightened at first, soon lost all fear in the good things before them, and ate with an appetite and a relish such as an epicure might have envied.

When they had all finished, Mrs. May dismissed the happy little things to their homes; some to go into low, damp cellars, and some into garrets; but each little child went off happier than it had ever been before, each with nice warm clothes and some pretty plaything; and each bearing a grateful heart to the good lady and her children, who had made them so happy.

When they were gone, little Laura and Fanny declared they had never passed so pleasant a Christmas; and Frank wished that every day could be just such a Christmas to the children of the poor.

"Well, my dear children," said Mrs. May, who overheard their expressions of delight, "do you not feel much happier than you would have

felt had you refused to relinquish your Christmas presents for the comfort of others? Think how many little hearts you have made glad by practising a little self-denial. Yes, to-day, my dears, you have really '*done unto others as ye would they should do unto you.*'"

The children kissed their mother, and assured her they had never felt so happy. Laura hoped she would give them permission to pass the next Christmas in the same manner. Fanny said she did not much think she should ever want any more playthings, for it was a great deal better to make other little children happy; while Frank manfully announced his intention of getting a new leg to his horse, and mending the sides of his cart, and then they would both be just as good as new; and he did not doubt Fanny's doll could be put to rights; for his part, he thought toys were silly things compared to a good dinner and a nice warm jacket.

"Well, I know one thing," whispered Laura to her sister Gertrude; "I know papa and

mama must have given up a good many pretty things themselves, for I do not believe our presents alone would have bought so many things; do you?"

"But every little helps, darling," said Gertrude, kissing her.

After tea, Mrs. May told the children that, as it was Christmas night, they might sit up and have a little dance, if sister Gertrude would play for them.

Gertrude accordingly sat down to the piano, and the little feet of the children were tripping merrily over the carpet, when suddenly the folding-doors were drawn aside, and there, in the centre of the back parlour, stood a Christmas-tree most brilliantly lighted. On the top was placed the figure of a little fairy, with beautiful golden wings. In one hand she held a scroll, on which was painted:

A good action merits reward.

With the other she pointed to Santa Claus, who,

half hidden among the branches, appeared to be busily unloading his great pockets of all sorts of toys.

"Oh, it would have made your heart dance with pleasure if you could only have been there to have witnessed the delight and joyful surprise of the children when their mother told them this beautiful Christmas-tree was theirs!

Emeline burst into tears, and was leaving the room, when Mrs. May said:

"Come back, Emeline. I think you have been sufficiently punished for your selfishness, by witnessing the happiness of others in which you could have no share. You will find your Christmas presents upon the tree; and here, my dear, is your paint-box and portfolio all prepared for you."

"Mama, dear mama, I cannot take them!" exclaimed Emeline. "I do not merit them. Keep them for me, will you, mama, until you think I better deserve them than I now do."

Mrs. May embraced the penitent girl, and

promised she would do so. Nor was it long, I am happy to say, before Emeline received them from her dear mother's hands.

Christmas, after all, proved a happy day for Emeline; for with it came the spirits of the Sweet South Wind to rescue her young heart from the power of the Ice King.

THE END.

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